

BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Paul VI

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: May 29

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IN BRIEF

Saint Paul VI

Pope from 1963 to 1978, who brought the Second Vatican Council to its close.

Feast day	May 29
Born	September 26, 1897, Concesio, Lombardy, Italy
Died	August 6, 1978, Castel Gandolfo, Italy
Canonized	October 14, 2018, by Pope Francis
Era	20th century

In this booklet

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Tomb of Saint Paul VI in the Vatican Grottoes

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Paul VI

Saint Paul VI, born Giovanni Battista Montini, was pope from 1963 to 1978. Elected in the middle of the Second Vatican Council, he brought it to a close and then put it into practice, amid tensions and criticism from every side. The first pope to travel by plane and to visit five continents, he embraced the Patriarch of Constantinople and spoke before the United Nations in New York. He died on August 6, 1978, was canonized in 2018 and is celebrated on May 29, the anniversary of his priestly ordination.

Who was Saint Paul VI?

Giovanni Battista Montini was born on September 26, 1897, in Concesio, near Brescia, in the Lombardy region of northern Italy. His father, Giorgio, was a lawyer, journalist and Catholic member of parliament; his mother, Giuditta Alghisi, was active in Catholic Action. Because of his fragile health, young Montini did part of his studies at home. He was ordained a priest in Brescia on May 29, 1920, and then sent to Rome to be trained in the diplomacy of the Holy See.

For more than thirty years he worked at the Secretariat of State, close to Pius XI and then Pius XII. He also served as a chaplain to Catholic university students, teaching them to unite faith and intelligence. During the Second World War, he coordinated part of the Vatican's aid to refugees and prisoners.

Key dates in the life of Paul VI

- **September 26, 1897**: Born in Concesio.
- **May 29, 1920**: Ordained a priest in Brescia.
- **1922-1954**: Serves at the Secretariat of State of the Holy See.
- **1954**: Archbishop of Milan.

- **1958**: The first cardinal created by John XXIII.
- **June 21, 1963**: Elected pope, he takes the name Paul.
- **January 1964**: Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and meeting in Jerusalem with Patriarch Athenagoras.
- **October 4, 1965**: Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York.
- **December 8, 1965**: Closing of the Second Vatican Council.
- **1967**: Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* on the development of peoples.
- **1968**: Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on marriage and the transmission of life.
- **1975**: Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on evangelization.
- **August 6, 1978**: Dies at Castel Gandolfo, on the feast of the Transfiguration.
- **October 19, 2014**: Beatified by Pope Francis.
- **October 14, 2018**: Canonized by Pope Francis, together with Óscar Romero.

Archbishop of Milan

In 1954, Pius XII appointed Montini Archbishop of Milan, the largest diocese in Italy, then in the midst of rapid industrialization. He visited factories and working-class neighborhoods, had dozens of churches built in the new suburbs and organized a great "mission" to the city in 1957. This pastoral experience would shape his pontificate.



The house where Paul VI was born, in Concesio.

The pope of the Council

Saint John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council in 1962 and died in June 1963. Elected to succeed him, Paul VI announced at once that he would continue it. He presided over three of its sessions, patiently seeking texts that could gather the near unanimity of the bishops, and closed it on December 8, 1965.

He then devoted himself to putting it into practice: reform of the liturgy and a new Roman Missal, creation of the Synod of Bishops, reform of the Roman Curia, dialogue with the other Christian Churches and with other religions. On December 7, 1965, the day before the close of the Council, Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras lifted the mutual excommunications exchanged in 1054 between Rome and Constantinople, a historic gesture for Christian unity.



A session of the Second Vatican Council in Saint Peter's Basilica.

A pilgrim pope

Paul VI was the first pope of modern times to leave Italy regularly: the Holy Land, India, New York, Portugal, Turkey, Colombia, Switzerland, Uganda, and Asia and Oceania, with stops that included the Philippines and Australia. At the United Nations in 1965, he told the representatives of the nations: "No more war, war never again!" In 1967, his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* declared that "development is the new name for peace."

Humanae Vitae and the trials of his pontificate

In 1968, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* reaffirmed the Church's teaching on birth regulation. It provoked strong opposition, including within the Church, and Paul VI wrote no further encyclicals afterward. The last years of his

pontificate were marked by divisions after the Council and, in the spring of 1978, by the kidnapping and murder of his friend Aldo Moro, a former prime minister of Italy, for whom he had publicly pleaded with the kidnappers.

What can we learn from his holiness?

Paul VI has often been described as a tormented man, torn between the conflicting expectations of his time. The Church recognized in him a faithful servant who carried heavy decisions alone out of love for her, and a pastor passionate about dialogue with the modern world. He also wrote one of the most beautiful texts on Christian joy, the apostolic exhortation *Gaudete in Domino* (1975).

Why pray to Saint Paul VI?

Saint Paul VI is not the official patron of a particular group, but Catholics turn to him for the Church, for peace among nations, for families and for those who carry heavy responsibilities and feel alone in their decisions. Because he defended human life and married love in *Humanae Vitae*, many couples and families also ask his intercession. To pray with him, use the prayer to Saint Paul VI or the novena to Saint Paul VI, from May 20 to 28.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Paul VI in art

- **The white papal cassock** and the red mozzetta of the pope.
- **The pastoral staff topped with a crucifix**, which he used and which his successors adopted.
- **His slender figure and large glasses**, familiar from the photographs of his travels.



The tomb of Saint Paul VI in the Vatican Grottoes.

Where to pray to Saint Paul VI

- **Rome**: his tomb in the Vatican Grottoes, beneath Saint Peter's Basilica.
- **Concesio** (Lombardy): the house where he was born.
- **Brescia**: the cathedral where he was ordained a priest.
- **Milan**: the cathedral, his seat as archbishop from 1954 to 1963.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Paul VI for the Church and for Peace

Saint Paul VI did not leave a prayer that became traditional, but several of his words remain famous. Below you will find two of them, with their sources, followed by an original prayer to Saint Paul VI by Saintspedia.

Two sayings of Paul VI to meditate on

> *"No more war, war never again! Peace, it is peace which must guide the destinies of peoples and of all mankind."*

Source: address of Paul VI to the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, October 4, 1965.

> *"Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."*

Source: Paul VI, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 41, December 8, 1975, quoting an address of 1974. The full text is available on the Vatican website.



Saint Paul VI at prayer.

Prayer to Saint Paul VI

Saint Paul VI, you who loved the Church so much that you carried difficult decisions for her, pray for her today. May she remain faithful to Christ and open to the world he wants to save.

You who cried out before the nations, "No more war," obtain peace for peoples torn apart by violence, and help us to be, wherever we live, builders of dialogue.

You who taught that development is the new name for peace, make us attentive to the poor and to forgotten peoples.

I also entrust to you those who carry heavy responsibilities and feel alone, and my own intention: (name it in silence).

Teach me to be a witness more than a teacher, and to keep, even in times of trial, the joy that the Lord gives. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Paul VI is celebrated on May 29, the anniversary of his priestly ordination in 1920. Pray to him for the unity of the Church, for peace in the world, for married couples and families, and for anyone who must make a hard decision that others may not understand. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Paul VI, from May 20 to 28, and read the life of Saint Paul VI.

NOVENA

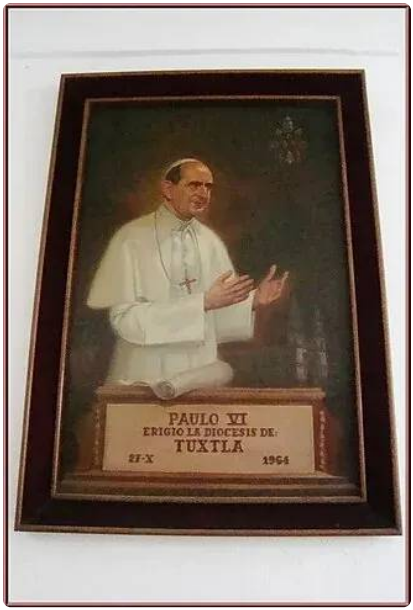
Novena to Saint Paul VI

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life and writings of Saint Paul VI. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin on May 20: it ends on May 28, the day before his feast on May 29. You can also pray it at any time of year, for the Church, for peace or for someone who faces a heavy decision.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, say the prayer of the day and then an Our Father. The small act suggested for the day helps you carry the prayer into your daily life. If you miss a day, simply pick up where you left off.

The nine days follow the great concerns of his life: love for the Church, faith and reason, mission, dialogue, Christian unity, peace, the development of peoples, the loneliness of leadership and Christian joy.



Saint Paul VI, in a church statue or window.

Day 1: Loving the Church

Paul VI served the Church all his life, in the offices of the Roman Curia as in the streets of Milan. He loved her as she is, with her greatness and her weaknesses, and he never stopped working so that she would show the face of Christ more clearly.

Prayer: Lord, help me love your Church and serve her in my own place, with patience.

Today: Pray for your parish and for those who lead it.

Day 2: Uniting faith and intelligence

As a chaplain to university students, the young Montini wanted Christians who think. He was a great reader and believed that faith has nothing to fear from honest questions.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, enlighten my mind and strengthen my faith.

Today: Read a passage from a Council document or from the Gospel of the day.

Day 3: Going out to those who are far away

As Archbishop of Milan, he visited factories and built churches in the new neighborhoods. He did not want to wait for people to come to church: he went to meet them where they lived and worked.

Prayer: Lord, send me to those who do not know you, with respect and kindness.

Today: Get in touch with someone you have lost contact with.

Day 4: Dialogue

Paul VI made dialogue a way of being Church: with separated Christians, with believers of other religions, with the modern world. To dialogue is not to give up what one believes, but to speak the truth while truly listening.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to listen for real, and to speak with truth and gentleness.

Today: Have a sincere conversation with someone who thinks differently.

Day 5: Christian unity

In Jerusalem in 1964, Paul VI embraced Patriarch Athenagoras. The following year, they lifted the excommunications of 1054. Nine centuries of mistrust began to unravel. Unity is a gift we ask for, but also a path we walk, one meeting at a time.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you who prayed that all may be one, heal the divisions among Christians.

Today: Pray for Christians of a denomination other than your own.

Day 6: War never again

At the United Nations, the pope begged the nations to renounce war. Peace also begins in families, neighborhoods and hearts, in the words we choose and the grudges we let go.

Prayer: God of peace, disarm violent hearts, beginning with mine.

Today: Hold back a hurtful word in a tense discussion.



Praying with Saint Paul VI.

Day 7: The development of peoples

"Development is the new name for peace." For Paul VI, the Gospel cannot ignore hunger and poverty. Peace between nations will not last while some peoples lack what they need to live with dignity.

Prayer: Father of all people, make me one in solidarity with those who lack what they need.

Today: Support a charity that works for international development.

Day 8: Carrying a decision alone

Paul VI made decisions he knew would be unpopular, and he suffered from them. He is a friend to all who must decide in solitude, whether in the Church, in public life, in business or in the family.

Prayer: Lord, support those who carry heavy responsibilities. Give them wisdom and inner peace.

Today: Pray for a leader, an elected official or a business manager you know.

Day 9: Christian joy

In 1975, this pope known for his seriousness wrote an entire exhortation on joy, *Gaudete in Domino*. Christian joy is not the absence of trials, but the certainty of being loved by God.

Prayer: Lord, I place the intention of this novena in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Paul VI, give me your joy. Amen.

Today: Share with someone a reason to rejoice.

Closing prayer

Saint Paul VI, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have placed before you. Pray for the Church, for peace among peoples and for those who doubt. Obtain for us the grace to be joyful witnesses of the Gospel. Amen.

After the novena

On May 29, if you can, attend Mass and pray for the pope and for the unity of Christians. Keep one of the acts of these nine days as a habit: a regular prayer for those who lead, a sincere conversation with someone who thinks differently, or support for people in need far away.

To go further, read the life of Saint Paul VI and pray the prayer to Saint Paul VI.

PILGRIMAGE

Tomb of Saint Paul VI in the Vatican Grottoes

Saint Paul VI rests in the Vatican Grottoes, beneath Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. In keeping with his will, he wanted a simple burial, "in the true earth." This plain tomb is the main place where pilgrims come to pray to him, along with Concesio, his native village near Brescia.

A bare tomb

At his funeral in August 1978, Paul VI's wooden coffin was placed directly on the ground of Saint Peter's Square, topped by a simple open Book of the Gospels, whose pages the wind turned. He was then buried in the Vatican Grottoes, the space between the present basilica and the old Constantinian basilica, where many popes rest. His tomb, a simple slab, contrasts with the funeral monuments of his predecessors.



Tomb of Saint Paul VI in the Vatican Grottoes.

Visiting the Vatican Grottoes

The grottoes are entered from Saint Peter's Basilica; admission is free, but the route is one-way and quiet reverence is expected. Visitors also pass close to the tomb of Saint Peter, beneath the Altar of the Confession. The route allows you to pray before the tombs of several 20th-century popes. The bodies of Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II, by contrast, rest in the basilica itself.

Praying on site

Before your visit, you may wish to read the life of Saint Paul VI. The passage in front of his tomb is brief: it helps to prepare in advance the intention you want to entrust to him, and then to continue your prayer in the basilica with the prayer to Saint Paul VI. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.



Tomb of Saint Paul VI in the Vatican Grottoes, the interior.

Other places connected with Saint Paul VI

- **Concesio** (Lombardy): his birthplace and the places of his childhood, about six miles from Brescia.
- **Brescia**: the cathedral where he was ordained a priest on May 29, 1920.
- **Milan**: the cathedral, seat of his episcopate from 1954 to 1963.
- **Castel Gandolfo**: the popes' summer residence, where he died on August 6, 1978.

Practical information

Entry into Saint Peter's Basilica goes through a security check, and the wait can be long in high season: come early in the morning. Modest dress is required (shoulders and knees covered). The Vatican Grottoes may be closed during certain celebrations: check the hours on the basilica's official website before you come.

Credits and sources

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